



**LC STUDY GUIDE: DONE IN SYNC WITH
THE “WORK MATTERS” SERMON SERIES
The Passage – Ecclesiastes 2:17-26
For LCs meeting 1/26/14-2/8/14**

These LC studies complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading and are not to be distributed to the entire group (it limits conversation). Not all of these questions need to be used in your LC meeting. Best to consider this a head-start and customize these for your LC study.

Starter Questions

Take a little time and talk about what you do for work. Remember that our work is not only what we are paid to do, but what we are committed to labor for.

What joys and satisfaction do you find in your work? What frustrations exist?

What do you hope to feel as you look back on all your years of labor?

Big Idea: We are reminded that the fruits of our labor are not eternal, but living a life that is pleasing to God endures.

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26

17 So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. **18** I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. **19** And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. **20** So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. **21** For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. **22** What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun? **23** All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.

24 A person can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, **25** for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment?

26 To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

O – What does the “Teacher” (“Teacher” or “One who imparts knowledge” are the literal meanings of the name Ecclesiastes) hate and why does he feel this way?

O – How does he describe the futility of work?
(“A chasing after the wind,” v. 17.)

I – What do you think the Teacher is truly seeking?

I – Assuming he has children, why do you suppose the Teacher is not content with the idea of passing along the fruit of his labor to his heirs or do you think he is frustrated by something else?

(We could speculate that he has witnessed spoiled heirs squandering the hard work of their parents but the real issue seems to be that he finds no fulfillment in his success. He wishes his labor brought him greater meaning.)

O – According to this section, what is the *only* positive maxim found in this life?
(It’s in vv. 24-26.)

O – What is the distinction given between sinners and those who please God?

O – What words, if any, in this passage do you find consistent with your experience? And if the Teacher came to you for advice, what would you share with him?

A – We’ve often heard it said that our hands will not be able to carry anything out of this life but what can be carried in our hearts from this life to the next?

Key: O – Observation. I – Interpretation. A – Application

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.